Journal of Public Affairs Education

**Editor's Midterm Report
to the Executive Council of the
Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration**

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Journal of Public Affairs Education
2019 Midyear Report

This report from the co-Editors-in-Chief of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* to the executive council of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration covers operations and editorial activates from January 1, 2019 through August 31, 2019. The report presents information about the status of the journal and its influence on the field, as well as details regarding the submission and processing of manuscripts and any relevant news from the editorial office. As appropriate, we have provided information from previous years for comparison. Finally, the report lists both the members of the editorial team and the editorial board for the reporting period.

Importance and Impact

The Journal of Public Affairs Education strives to achieve a position as a leading journal in the field of public administration. To this end, we are undertaking efforts to improve the overall quality of the journal and our reputation throughout the discipline. Currently, the journal is not indexed in the Social Science Citation Index. This means that the journal does not have an impact factor calculated for the journal. At our request, earlier this year Taylor and Francis manually calculated the impact factor for the journal. The result of this calculation is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Impact Factor

Year	Articles Published	Citations	Impact Factor
2017	62	28	0.452*
2018	56	33	0.589*

* Estimated

We are happy to report that our estimated 2018 impact factor for the journal is 0.589, a 30.31% increase over the estimated 2017 factor. The estimated 2018 impact factor for the journal places us at 44th of 47 among public administration journals. The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2018 to articles published in the journal during 2017 and 2016. The process of improving the impact factor of a journal is slow, but not insurmountable. This can be achieved by publishing higher quality of research that appeals to a broader audience. It can also be increased by increasing the accessibility of the research published. Our transition to Taylor and Francis as the publisher of the journal assists in increasing the accessibility of the research we publish. Not only are all articles now available in one single, easy to search location, but Taylor and Francis is also assisting in having the journal included in more indices to expand accessibility further.

Regarding publishing better quality research, the published articles that are included in the ranking are those that were accepted and published under the previous editorship. We anticipate that the impact factor will improve in 2019 as new articles are incorporated into the calculation. This is in part due to changes in the quality of research that we have been accepting for publication. Due to page limits imposed by Taylor and Francis, we have to be more discerning in the manuscripts we accept for publication. As a result, we have begun turning some manuscripts

away that would have likely been accepted under the previous editorial team. By increasing the number of manuscripts submitted to the journal and staying within the allotted page limit of the journal, we are forced to accept only the absolute best manuscripts submitted. Over time, this should help to increase the impact factor.

Lastly, Taylor and Francis will continue working with us to improve the overall impact factor of the journal. A representative from the publisher has volunteered their time to meet with us during our editorial board meeting at the NASPAA conference. The topic of conversation is how we can improve our citation count and how the editorial board can provide assistance in this process. A key function of improving the citation count is how to get articles published in the Journal of Public Affairs Education cited elsewhere and how to ensure that the articles cited elsewhere are from more recent years.

Submissions and Turnaround Time

The total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until an editorial submission is made are provided in Table 2. The table provides the annual data beginning in 2011, when records in the Editorial Manager web service began and is extended to August 31, 2019, the closing date of this report. Although the data shows a significant decline in submissions in recent years, it also shows the resurgence of the journal beginning in 2018. During the first eight months of 2019, 56 manuscripts were submitted to the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*. For comparison, during the same eight months of 2018, 61 submissions were received. The difference in rates from 2018 to 2019 is largely due to the timing of the Academic Women of PA symposium that was published earlier this year. We anticipate that we will meet or exceed the number of submissions from 2018 based on a symposium on work-life balance that is underway.

Table 2: Yearly Submissions and Mean Turnaround Times

Year	Number of Submissions	Mean Turnaround Time (Days)
2011	47	34
2012	48	43
2013	69	40
2014	94	79
2015	93	64
2016	52	51
2017	41	72
2018	96	26
2019*	56	28

* Represents submissions from January 1 through August 31

As Table 2 also shows, the Journal of Public Affairs Education editorial team has been successful at reducing and maintaining a reduced turnaround time for the processing of

manuscripts. A goal of our editorial team is to maintain a quick review process of 30 days or less. Thus far in 2019, the mean turnaround time is 28 days, 2 days longer than the review time in 2018 but 44 days shorter than the review time in 2017 and 31 days shorter than the average mean time from 2011 through 2017. During 2019 only a small number of manuscripts have languished in wait for reviewer comments. In such instances we have contacted the reviewers to ensure their continued participation and, when necessary, made an editorial decision based upon the available information rather than trying to solicit an additional reviewer.

Editorial Decisions

Table 3 provides the decision outcomes for initial submissions, first revisions and second revisions during the reporting period. As outlined in this table, from January 1 through August 31, 2019, we made decisions on 55 manuscripts.

Table 3: Editorial Decisions

Decision	Initial Submission (n=55)	First Revision (n=20)	Second Revision (n=2)
Desk Reject	18	---	---
Reject	9	2	---
Revise and Resubmit	28	2	---
Accept	---	16	2

In making editorial decisions on manuscripts, we have tried to take a preemptive approach with our desk rejects. To preserve a positive relationship with our reviewers, we have sought to desk reject those submissions that were inappropriate for the journal or unlikely to merge from review with a positive decision. At the same time, we have seen a dramatic increase in the quality of manuscripts being submitted, leading to higher than expected positive decisions.

Reviews and Referees

From January 1 through August 31, 2019, the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* received 114 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until the receipt of the review is 22.1 (or 20.6 days from the day the referee accepts the invitation). The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequency of Reviewer Recommendations

Recommendation	Percentage (N=114)
Reject	19%
Revise and Resubmit	47.3%
Accept with Minor Revisions	14.7%
Accept as is	19%

We believe that the frequency of the reviewer recommendations shows a skewed relationship. In 2018 we realized that many reviewers recommended accepting all manuscripts sent to them regardless of the manuscript quality. At that time we adjusted our assigning of manuscripts to include the use of the rating tool in which we can quickly indicate the quality of a review. This allows us to ensure manuscripts are sent to reviewers that can provide a more accurate perspective of the manuscripts. In comparison to 2018, thus far was have seen a recommendation of accept for 33.7% of manuscripts as compared to 43.2% during 2018. We have also seen a change in terms of when the recommendation is made, with most recommendations for acceptance thus far in 2019 coming after at least one round of review. In contrast, most recommendations of acceptance in 2018 came during the first round.

While 114 reviewer reports were received, during the reporting period a total of 185 review requests were sent out. The distribution of responses to the invitation is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Responses to Invitation to Review a Manuscript

Response	Percentage	Subtotal
Completed Review	59.5%	
Review in Progress	3.2%	
		62.7%
Declined Invitation	21.6%	
Never Responded	15.7%	
		37.3%

In comparison to other journals in the public administration, reviewers for the journal are performing at a high rate. A mean review time of 22.1 days and a non-response rate of 15.7% of review requests are unusually low and completed review rate of 59.5% is unusually high, all of which are testaments to the willingness of reviewers to engage the journal and its mission.

News

The *Journal of Public Affairs Education* underwent significant change in 2018. This includes editorial changes and publisher changes. In 2019 we have begun to emerge from that transition period and have started considering the future of the journal. We began our planning of the future of the journal by conducting a survey of public affairs faculty and administrators in the spring semester. The survey showed that while faculty found the journal useful in their teaching, many did not consider it a legitimate publication for the purposes of tenure and promotion. Tied with this was a belief by many people that the journal is not peer-reviewed. We believe that these perspectives can be overcome, but that perspectives do change slowly. As such, we need to continue working on improving the quality of the journal and its reputation in the field.

Last fall we were accepted into Elsevier's SCOPUS Index. This listing will help encourage an international authorship from faculty at NASPAA member schools. We also began the necessary preparation for our application to Clarivate Analytics for the Emerging Journals Citation Index (ESCI, the precursor for inclusion in the Social Science Citation Index [SSCI]). We are happy to report that we are now listed in the index effective May 2019.

As mentioned previously under "Importance and Impact," the estimated impact factor for the journal is 0.584. If we were listed in SSCI, this would place the journal at 44th of 47 journals. On the recommendation of Taylor and Francis, we are waiting to apply for inclusion in SSCI until our impact factor would place us in the top 60% of public administration journals. Journals have a limited number of times they can apply for SSCI, and our publisher reports their highest rates of success with applications when the journal can pass the 60% mark.

One last area of news that we would like to highlight relates to symposia. We frequently receive requests to editor special issues of the journal. The number of requests far exceeds the number of issues we publish. In order to ensure that we continue publishing the highest quality of research, we have limited the number of symposia we publish and focus only on those with the broadest reach. Earlier this year, we published a symposium in conjunction with Academic Women in Public Administration. We also have two symposia in the works. The first is on MPA programs in Asia and the second is on work-life balance. We believe that both will help further the reputation of the journal and support our mission to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in public affairs programs.

Editorial Team

The current editorial team for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* is:

Editors-in-Chief
Bruce D. McDonald – North Carolina State University
William Hatcher – Augusta University

International and Engagement Editor
Kendra Stewart – College of Charleston

Case Studies Editor
Stephen Kleinschmit – University of Illinois Chicago

Book Review Editor
Jessica Terman – George Mason University

Social Media Editor
Alicia Schatteman – Northern Illinois University

Assistant Editor
J.W. Decker – North Carolina State University

Editorial Board

Members of the editorial board for the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* serve three-year, rotating terms that adhere to the calendar year with service beginning on January 1st in year one and ending on December 31st in year three. Each year, ten members of the editorial board end their service. To select new members, the editors-in-chief of the journal and NASAA's journal oversight committee each nominate five new members. Nominations are then subjected to confirmation by the other nominating group.

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